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STATE HISTORICAL ACTIVITIES

Several states to which Oregon naturally looks for suggestions are exhibiting interesting new developments in the organization and the work of their historical agencies. Thorough and systematic surveys are being conducted for locating and listing the source materials of their local and state history; and movements are started that will insure the safe-keeping and the use of the newly disclosed means to a more adequate history.

CALIFORNIA HISTORICAL SURVEY COMMISSION—Our neighbor on the south, California, has provided a historical survey commission to investigate the documents in local depositories and in the possession of private individuals and other sources of original information on the early history of the state. A scientific record will be made of all sources thus disclosed. This commission began its work in October, 1915. It is composed of three members. One was nominated by the regents of the University of California and one by the board of general officers of the Order of Native Sons of the Golden West. An advisory committee of eight members, composed of persons "of recognized ability and experience in dealing with materials of California history," is co-operating with the commission. A secretary and archivist has general supervision of its field work.

The preliminary report of this historical survey commission was issued in March, 1917. In it the commission protests emphatically that it is not writing a history of the state, nor is it engaged in the collection of historical documents. Its work is simply "to investigate documents and to compile and keep a report of such information as may be found in local depositories, in the possession of individuals and elsewhere, relating to the early history of the state."

It began its survey with the records of the various county archives and expects to extend its activities to the archives of the state and to the local federal offices. It is also listing

the collections of public libraries, historical societies and other institutions, as well as documents in the possession of private individuals, as fast as its time and resources permit. Early newspaper files, the records of religious and social institutions and of business concerns are not being overlooked.

In connection with its work on the county archives it is concerned with determining their historical value and in indicating how they may be used by the student of the social sciences. It is applying the principles of archive science toward securing the best form and filing of records in the public offices, but also to make sure of their preservation. "While it is a felony for an official to destroy any public record entrusted to his care, an investigation of the courthouses will show that many records of value to the research worker, often involving even such vital matters as land titles, are being crowded into damp basements, dusty, mice-infested attics, or into outbuildings used for wood, oil and even gasoline."

At the time of making its preliminary report the commission had about finished its work on the county archives and intended to turn to newspaper files and other lines of investigation, mainly the records of the United States land offices and other local federal offices. Documents in private hands and in local public libraries have also been listed. It did not consider that such important collections as those in the State Library at Sacramento, the Bancroft collection at Berkeley, the Sutro collection, and that of the Golden Gate Park needed its immediate attention. They were safely housed and fairly well known. Nor had it the means to undertake so large a task.

The commission uses the second part of its preliminary report to give an historical analysis of the archives of the county clerk. This is done for the purpose of illustrating one typical phase of the work connected with the survey of the county archives. In the third part a full report on the archives of Humboldt County is given as a sample of what the commission will have for its final report, and also as an example of well preserved county archives.

As the commission has already discovered many documents of unique value in possession of private individuals and in local depositories, the suggestion of the publication of the texts of these naturally arises, in order that the results of the commission's labors may be brought to full fruition.

HISTORICAL FIELD WORK IN THE MIDDLE WEST—The historical survey activity as conducted by the California commission is but historical field work toned up to desirable standards of efficiency, thoroughness and continuity. The historical agencies of Illinois, Michigan and Minnesota have been active in recent years with this up-to-date field work. Instead of intermittent forays in search of materials, regular and sustained campaigns have been in progress in these states. Field work has been transformed into organized effort "to exhaust all practical possibilities" having "to do with the thoroughgoing conservation of the vast, yet unexplored and neglected historical resources which abound, widely scattered, in every community." The immediate object of this new systematized field work is to make known and permanently accessible, preferably in public depositories, all discoverable materials of history in a community. The ultimate aim must be to arouse the interest and to secure the co-operation of the community itself. The ideal conditions are achieved when each community is placed in permanent possession of all its historical treasures and is made permanently mindful of their value.

A changing conception of history and of their functions is impelling the historical agencies in these Middle West states to adopt this more scientific and intensive method with their field work. If history is to portray "the vast ongoing common life" of a community, no phase of community life, whether it be political, social, economic or otherwise, can be overlooked. The realization of the ideal history of any community can be expected only after the accumulation, or at least the bringing to light, of all discoverable materials relating to the life of that community. Much as the increased demand for metals and the improved processes of ore reduction make profitable the use of low percentage and refractory ore beds, previously

regarded as without value, so the broader conceptions of history and the keener powers of interpretation of sources have developed a sense of need for this intensive and exhaustive field work. Regularly organized campaigns of search and education in the field in Middle West states are in progress in pursuance of this new appreciation of historical sources.

In Minnesota the work is still in its initial stages. A field agent of the state historical society is to visit each county and make an inventory of the county archives. He is also to search for material of historical value in private hands, securing the same for the society whenever possible, and finally he is to encourage in every possible way local historical activity. The more definite task of this field agent is to inventory the county archives; his attention to other objects depends upon developments in the field. These are reported as most encouraging. A guide book to the county records will be realized. Conditions of the records, of keeping and preserving them, are noted, with the view of effecting improvements and enhancing their usefulness for administration and for historical purposes.

A definite effort is made also to enlist the interest of some one person in each locality, who will agree to keep on the lookout for material; one who will either take steps to secure such material, or inform the society about it; one, in short, who will act as a sort of representative of the society in his community.

In Illinois this line of investigation has attained a more advanced stage. In 1915 a volume on *County Archives of the State of Illinois*, as Vol. 12 of the Illinois Historical Collections, was issued. The Illinois Historical Survey has the work in charge.

In Michigan the historical commission is placing special reliance upon county and other local historical societies in carrying out the purposes of systematic field work. Under an elaborate system of accrediting county historical societies will be invited to co-operate in collecting manuscripts and printed materials now widely scattered in private homes. The first

issue of the *Michigan Historical Magazine*, dated July, 1917, includes extensive reports on the organization and activities of county and other local historical societies, and on the historical work of local chapters of the Daughters of the American Revolution.

In line with this general campaign to make available the materials relating to Michigan history, the historical commission has nearly completed a bibliography of the printed materials. This was accomplished in co-operation with the local libraries in the state and with the Library of Congress. This bibliography, with the index planned for it, will enable the user to find readily all material relating to any event in the life of the state. The entries will show in what libraries the specific items may be consulted.

The first publication of the University series of the commission's publications is *Economic and Social History of Michigan*. It is a careful study of settlement of the lower peninsula during the territorial period, 1806-1837.

THE INDIANA CENTENNIAL OF STATEHOOD—To promote the proper observance of the centennial of Indiana's admission to the Union the Indiana Historical Commission was created in 1915. The formal celebration took place at Indianapolis on December 11, 1916. The centennial address was delivered by James A. Woodburn of the department of history of the State University, on the theme, "The Foundation of the Commonwealth." A centennial ode was read by William D. Foulke. The permanent tangible results of the commission's work are appearing in a series of bulletins and in a series of volumes containing documentary material relating to different phases of the state's history. These include one on *Indiana as Seen by Early Travelers*, a collection of reprints from books of travel, letters and diaries, prior to 1830. Two of these volumes constitute a set on *Constitution Making in Indiana*, a source book of constitutional documents with historical introduction and critical notes. The material centers about the two constitutions under which Indiana has been governed in the course

of one hundred years—the constitution of 1816 and that of 1857. Two additional volumes are planned to include the message of the governors from territorial days to 1851.

PLANS FOR THE ILLINOIS CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION—Three historical agencies in Illinois are concentrating their energies on the preparation for the celebration of the statehood centennial anniversary in 1918. A general state-wide and local celebrations are planned. Episodes in Illinois history will be staged by suitable pageantry. A centennial history of five volumes has been contracted for. The preliminary volume surveying Illinois conditions in 1818 is published. The centennial memorial building commission has raised the \$100,000 to be added to the \$125,000 appropriated by the general assembly for the erection of a monument to the state's progress in the last one hundred years.